



# Completion Grants Report 2022

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This report is prepared pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-7-178(g), which instructs the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) to:

“...submit an annual report on the outcomes of the [Completion Grants] pilot program to the education committee of the senate and to the education committee of the house of representatives...”

In pursuit of its mission to increase the number of Tennesseans with a postsecondary credential, THEC and the Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation (TSAC) have implemented various programs and initiatives to encourage Tennesseans to engage with higher education and support students through completion.

The Tennessee Promise program, signed into law by the Tennessee General Assembly in 2014, provides tuition- and mandatory fee-free community college for Tennessee high school graduates. This report highlights the outcomes of the first year of a four-year pilot program to award completion grants to Tennessee Promise scholarship students receiving college coaching services delivered by Tennessee Promise partnering organizations.

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# Executive Summary

The Completion Grants Report (2022) is the first of four reports analyzing the completion grants pilot program initiated by the Tennessee General Assembly in 2021. One year of completion grant participation data was available at the time of reporting. The first report focuses on the program structure, administration, and early results from the pilot program's inaugural year. Future reports will include longitudinal student outcomes for recipients of completion grants.

At the time of this report, eight cohorts of Tennessee Promise students have matriculated to colleges across Tennessee. Completion grants were first made available to Tennessee Promise students participating in college coaching initiatives in fall 2021, which may include Tennessee Promise students from the fall 2019 cohort, fall 2020 cohort, and fall 2021 cohort (corresponding cohorts 5 through 7, respectively, captured in the annual [Tennessee Promise Report](#)).

Key findings from the report include:

- The Ayers Foundation, which serves 12 counties, awarded over 150 completion grants in the first year of the pilot.
- tnAchieves, which serves 83 counties, awarded over 1,100 completion grants in the first year of the pilot and expended available funds within ten weeks. Starting in 2022-23, tnAchieves received an additional one-time appropriation of \$14.5 million to expand coaching services and funds available for completion grants over five years.
- Individual students may receive multiple grants. *Grants* represent the number of completion grants awarded, whereas *recipients* represent the number of students receiving completion grants. On average, students received 1.9 completion grants with an average total amount of \$343 (**Table 3** and **Table 4**).
- In Academic Year 2021-22, 1,340 completion grants (totaling \$243,786) were awarded to 711 Tennessee Promise students (**Table 3** and **Table 4**).
- Transportation and Food were the categories demonstrating the highest need. A total of 521 completion grants were awarded to 405 students for Transportation. Four hundred and thirty-six (436) completion grants were awarded to 341 students for Food. Books, Supplies, and Class-Specific Fees, however, had the highest expenditures, exceeding \$116,000 (47.9% of overall expenditures). The Books, Supplies, and Class-Specific Fees category includes books, supplies, computers, and fees specific to academic programs (**Table 5**, **Figure 5**, and **Figure 6**).
- Compared to coaching students, Black and Hispanic completion grant recipients have greater representation. When compared to Tennessee Promise cohorts overall, women, Black, and Hispanic students are disproportionately represented in the college coaching program (**Table 6**).
- Most completion grants went to Tennessee Promise students at community colleges (1,030 grants), followed by students at Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology (179 grants), those at eligible private institutions (96 grants), and those at public universities (35 grants) (**Appendix C**).

# Introduction

The 2022 Completion Grants Report comprises two sections:

1. The first section provides an overview of the Tennessee Promise program and the completion grants pilot and summarizes the program details and its administration by the Ayers Foundation and tnAchieves.
2. The second section summarizes participation data from the 2021-22 academic year. Due to timing, recipient outcomes data are not finalized. Future reports will include student outcomes, including persistence and completion.

## *Data*

Data in this report come from the Tennessee Promise Partnering Organizations, [tnAchieves](#) and the [Ayers Foundation](#); the THEC Student Information System (THECSIS); and the TSAC Financial Aid System of Tennessee (FAST). Each year, Partnering Organizations submit a template to THEC/TSAC that includes participants in college coaching, applicants for completion grants, and recipients of completion grants.

## *Effects of COVID-19 on Tennessee Promise*

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, TSAC temporarily suspended rules created for receiving and/or maintaining Tennessee Promise eligibility. These temporary changes are outlined in the [Tennessee Promise Report](#). Some of these temporary rule suspensions impacted cohorts eligible to receive completion grants in 2021-2022.

More details on temporary rule deferrals for the Tennessee Promise scholarship and other programs can be found at [TSAC's COVID-19 Campus & Financial Aid](#) webpage. Data presented in future iterations of this report may not be comparable to the current report.

## *Privacy Notice*

Throughout this report, THEC complies with federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) requirements to protect students' personally identifiable information. When tables are presented, individual cells containing fewer than ten observations are suppressed. Adjacent cells may also be suppressed to prevent unmasking via subtraction (i.e., complementary suppression). The suppressed counts are included in the table totals.

Section 1:

Program Overview



## Program Description

Tennessee Promise is a last-dollar scholarship that provides recent high school graduates the opportunity to complete an associate degree or certificate program free of tuition and mandatory fees at a public community college, a Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT), or a public or private university with an eligible associate degree program.<sup>1</sup>

As a last-dollar scholarship, Tennessee Promise funds the remaining balance of tuition and mandatory fees after all other gift aid has been applied.<sup>2</sup> The amount of the Tennessee Promise award is based on the other gift aid a student receives. First, the federal Pell Grant is applied, followed by state gift aid (e.g., Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship awards and the Tennessee Student Assistance Award).<sup>3</sup> After all federal and state gift aid is applied to the student's total tuition and mandatory fees, the remaining balance is paid by Tennessee Promise. **Table 1** displays three different funding scenarios. Individuals who have met all eligibility criteria for Tennessee Promise and who have all tuition and mandatory fee expenses covered by gift aid (i.e., have a balance of \$0) are still considered Tennessee Promise students.

**Table 1:** Tennessee Promise Award Scenarios

	Example A	Example B	Example C
Tuition/mandatory fees	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$4,000
Gift aid (HOPE, Pell, TSAA)	\$4,250	\$3,250	\$0
Gap between grant aid and tuition/mandatory fees	\$0	\$750	\$4,000
Tennessee Promise award amount	\$0	\$750	\$4,000
Tuition/Mandatory Fees Balance	\$0	\$0	\$0

Tennessee Promise is among a suite of programs designed to increase educational attainment among Tennesseans. About one-third of Tennessee Promise students do not persist fall to fall, and this rate has remained consistent over time.<sup>4</sup> Researchers and policy organizations posit several strategies to improve retention and completion for students, including advising, student basic needs support, and open education resources, among others. Emergency grant funds are recognized as a valuable tool to support students experiencing acute, real-time financial needs to address transportation, housing, and food

<sup>1</sup> Scholarships for students attending eligible four-year institutions are equal to the average cost of tuition and mandatory fees at the public two-year postsecondary institutions less all other gift aid.

<sup>2</sup> Gift aid is money allotted to a student that does not need to be repaid, like scholarships and grants.

<sup>3</sup> The federal Pell Grant is a need-based grant offered to students with exceptional financial need who have not earned their bachelor's, graduate, or a professional degree. More on the Pell Grant can be found here: <https://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/types/grants/pell>

<sup>4</sup> See retention and completion details by cohort and term starting on page 25 of the [Tennessee Promise Report](#).

insecurity.<sup>5</sup> Completion grant programs have been in place in Tennessee communities to address financial emergencies for some time, but their scope and scale have varied.

In 2021, the Tennessee General Assembly created a statewide completion grant pilot for Tennessee Promise students who are experiencing a financial hardship that may prevent the student from completing their degree. Legislation requires that eligible Tennessee Promise students participate in a proactive, high-impact college coaching model that facilitates several one-on-one communications between students and coaches.

Partnering organizations, the Ayers Foundation and tnAchieves, further operationalized completion grant eligibility and financial need using the Pell Grant and expected family contribution (EFC).<sup>6</sup> Due to differences in number of students served and availability of resources in the first year, partnering organizations did not have the same threshold for financial need.<sup>7</sup> Students served by tnAchieves were eligible for a completion grant with a \$0 EFC. Students served by the Ayers Foundation needed to be Pell Grant recipients (any dollar amount) to be eligible for a completion grant. The scope of this program changed since its inception, with additional state funds allocated to tnAchieves to expand completion grants.

**Figure 1** illustrates the requirements a student must meet to be eligible for the completion grants pilot. An eligible student must be a Tennessee Promise eligible student, they must participate in college coaching, and they must meet certain financial thresholds.

**Figure 1:** Eligibility for Completion Grants



The completion grants pilot began in fall 2021 for the 2021-22 academic year.<sup>8</sup> Students meeting eligibility criteria, as determined by their partnering organization, receive notice of the availability of funds and are advised to apply if they experience financial hardship.

<sup>5</sup> Sage Education Advisors, Increasing College Persistence through Emergency Grant Programs, 2022, <https://www.heckscherfoundation.org/increasing-college-persistence-through-emergency-grant-programs/>

<sup>6</sup> Expected Family Contribution (EFC) is an index number used to determine eligibility for federal student aid. More information can be found here: <https://studentaid.gov/help-center/answers/article/what-is-efc>

<sup>7</sup> In the 2022-23 school year, both partnering organizations have the same threshold for financial need, which is any Pell grant receipt.

<sup>8</sup> In 2021-22, cohort 5 (fall 2019), cohort 6 (fall 2020), and cohort 7 (fall 2021) still may be eligible for Tennessee Promise, since students can maintain eligibility for up to five semesters (or eight trimesters at a TCAT).

There are five categories of financial hardship identified in the completion grant pilot:

1. **Food** – eligible students may receive up to one hundred fifty dollars (\$150) per request. Funds given via grocery cards.<sup>9</sup>
2. **Housing** – eligible students may receive up to one thousand dollars (\$1,000) per semester or six hundred and twenty-five dollars (\$625) per trimester. The partnering organization pays the entity (e.g., landlord) directly.
3. **Transportation** – eligible students may receive one hundred dollars (\$100) per request. Funds given via gas cards.
4. **Books/Supplies** – eligible students may receive up to one thousand dollars (\$1,000) per semester or six hundred and twenty-five dollars (\$625) per trimester. The partnering organization pays the bookstore, merchant, or provider directly.
5. **Class-Specific Fees** – eligible students may receive up to one thousand dollars (\$1,000) per semester or six hundred and twenty-five dollars (\$625) per trimester. The partnering organization pays the higher education institution directly.

For this year’s report, Books/Supplies and Class-Specific Fees are combined. This combined category represents Books, Supplies, Computers, and Fees specific to programs.

## Program Funding

The completion grant pilot established in T.C.A. § 49-7-178 is funded using repurposed funds from T.C.A. § 49-11-903, a work-based learning grant fund. Statute requires that THEC/TSAC not expend more than two hundred and fifty thousand dollars (\$250,000) of these funds in the first year of the pilot or any year thereafter. Completion grant funds are distributed to partnering organizations based on the number of counties served, translating to \$33,000 and \$217,000 annually for the Ayers Foundation and tnAchieves, respectively.

In year two, the General Assembly appropriated an additional one-time \$14,500,000 to tnAchieves to expand coaching and completion grants over five years. In year one, tnAchieves allocated \$1,300,000 to expand coaching services and \$1,600,000 for completion grants. As of December 1, 2022, tnAchieves had awarded 12,150 grants to 2,855 students totaling \$1,482,732 dollars, quadrupling the number of students served in 2021-22.

The completion grant pilot is embedded within the Tennessee Promise college coaching initiative, which provides proactive advising support to low-income Tennessee Promise students through the partnering organizations. In fiscal year 2022, \$1.1M was given to the partnering organizations to implement coaching, with \$106,000 to the Ayers Foundation and \$994,000 to tnAchieves. Importantly, the [Knox Promise](#), a community-based program serving Knox County high school graduates specifically with advising and

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<sup>9</sup> tnAchieves set a maximum award amount of \$100 to encourage more connections between coaches and students and to allow the dollars to extend to more students.

additional financial supports is a separate endeavor and students participating in coaching and completion grants in Knox County are not a part of this report.<sup>10</sup>

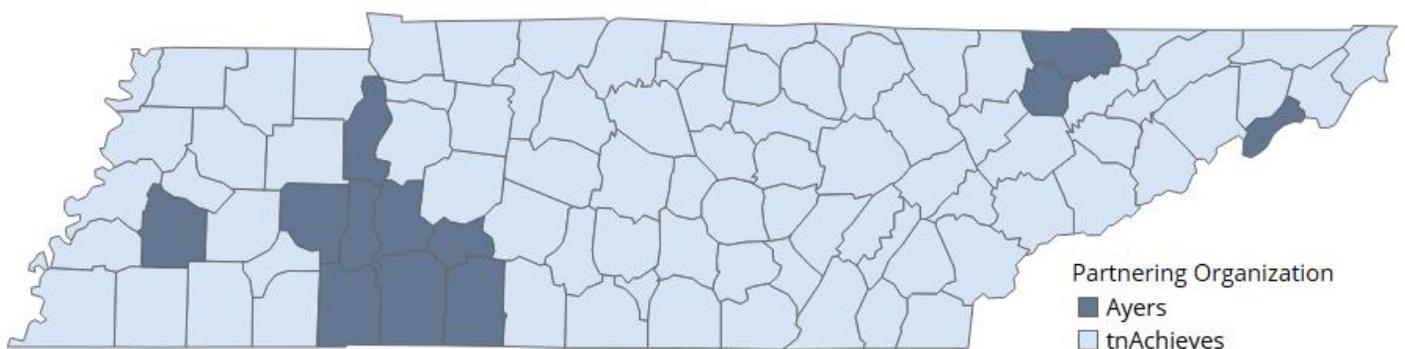
## Program Implementation

THEC/TSAC collaborates with partnering organizations, tnAchieves and the Ayers Foundation, to administer Tennessee Promise. These partnering organizations support high school seniors and college enrollees, through volunteer mentors and in-house advising staff, in the college-going process and through to college completion.

Prior to the statewide availability of tuition- and mandatory fee-free community and technical college in 2015, tnAchieves and the Ayers Foundation served local communities in college-going endeavors. tnAchieves began as Knox Achieves, a free community college program in Knox County that connected local high school graduates to volunteer mentors to assist and encourage students in the college-going process. The program expanded to 27 additional counties in 2014. The Ayers Foundation Scholar's Program is a college coaching program supporting students beginning in 8<sup>th</sup> grade and assisting them through college by bringing college counselor positions to local high schools. These organizations and their infrastructure helped support the rollout of statewide free college.<sup>11</sup>

**Figure 2** displays the service area for tnAchieves and the Ayers Foundation in the 2021-2022 school year.

**Figure 2:** Tennessee Promise Partnering Organization by County, 2021-22



## Ayers Foundation

The Ayers Foundation serves 12 counties in Tennessee using a high school counselor to deliver college counseling to students beginning in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. The Ayers program has been in operation since 2000, evolved with the placement of staff in local community colleges, and in 2021-22 expanded to seven of the twelve counties served. The Ayers model connects high school counselors with students across 18 high

<sup>10</sup> The additional financial supports include completion grants and textbook stipends.

<sup>11</sup> The Tennessee Promise program initially had three partnering organizations affiliated with each of the 95 counties across Tennessee. The Regional Economic Development Initiative (REDI) served seven counties in West Tennessee but ceased their role as a partnering organization in June 2019. Over time, the counties served by the partnering organizations have changed.

schools to develop plans for college and support students to and through college. Additionally, the Ayers Foundation employs staff at Columbia State Community College's Lawrence Campus and Jackson State Community College's Lexington Center.

The program is structured to build a relationship between the student and local high school counselor who remains a point of contact for the student throughout their college experience. The program seeks to connect a counselor with every student at least monthly.

All Tennessee Promise-eligible high school graduates who matriculate to Columbia and Jackson State community colleges, as well as at-risk students are considered *college coaching participants* in Ayers Foundation-served counties.<sup>12</sup> In addition to students' high school counselor, students at Columbia State and Jackson State have a local community college representative who communicates regularly with students personalizing outreach to college resources. The monthly interactions between students and counselors connect students to resources (e.g., academic supports, information about local bus schedules, financial resources, etc.). Often students may receive multiple communications each month from the central office Foundation staff, their high school counselor, and Ayers-employed staff at the community college.

College coaching students who receive a Pell Grant are eligible for the completion grants pilot. The Ayers Foundation employed multiple strategies to notify students of the grants. Tailored email communications, such as the one found in **Appendix B** were sent to eligible students beginning in August 2021.

In addition to email notifications, counselors and coaches use monthly check-ins as an opportunity to identify student needs and connect them with resources. Students in need fill out the Ayers Foundation [completion grants application](#), which notifies the counselor and initiates a contact between the student and Ayers Foundation staff.<sup>13</sup> In determining the award amount, counselors take into consideration the amount requested, the amount allowable per grant category, and, in the case of supplies, fees, or housing, the bill. Then, grants are awarded, and the counselor and student discuss strategies to support the student in their immediate and long-term needs. The Ayers Foundation was able to serve all eligible students who requested funds in 2021-22, providing grants in both fall 2021 and spring 2022.

## tnAchieves

tnAchieves serves 83 counties in Tennessee using a network of volunteers from the community and regional staff to administer the Tennessee Promise. Each year, tnAchieves partners volunteers with Tennessee Promise applicants in their community to assist students in applying to college and completing

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<sup>12</sup> The Ayers Foundation classifies a student as at-risk if they are first generation, low-income (receiving Pell grant), academically underprepared, experiencing transportation challenges, or at the high school counselor's recommendation.

<sup>13</sup> The Ayers Foundation experienced a few instances where ineligible students completed grant applications or supporting material was not provided and the grant application was denied (n=14).

their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), and to be a resource answering students' questions and encouraging their enrollment.

The tnAchieves model served as the framework for the statewide rollout of the Tennessee Promise. Upon the recognition that too few low-income students complete college using Promise and too few students transfer when they aspire to a four-year degree, tnAchieves piloted a coaching initiative. In 2017-18, the pilot assigned low-income, academically at-risk students to a coach who helped students through the myriad challenges to remaining enrolled. The model was proactive, with coaches reaching out to students at least twice per semester. In 2018-19, the program expanded statewide with \$1.25M support from the Tennessee General Assembly and Governor.

Each August, tnAchieves identifies all Tennessee Promise, Pell Grant recipients enrolling at community colleges full-time and assigns them to a COMPLETE coach – these students are *college coaching participants*. Students enrolling at another Tennessee Promise eligible institution, like a TCAT or four-year college, are added to the coaching cohort if they apply for a completion grant. tnAchieves employs 29 coaches who manage an approximately 300-student caseload per coach each year. Coaches are placed at various community colleges across the state, and these coaches lead outreach to their caseload with intensive, small group outreach in the first few weeks of classes, then personalized connection upon the establishment of the relationship. tnAchieves has established three benchmarks in defining a connection: talk to the student, learn something new about the student, and rank the student on a 1-5 scale for how they are doing during the semester. A student who participates in coaching has at least two connections per semester. Coaches use the ranking to prioritize student outreach, so that the neediest students receive support. Ultimately, a small number of students (approximately 10% each year) do not respond to multiple outreaches and are eventually removed from the coaching cohort.

Like the [Knox Promise program](#), the statewide completion grant pilot uses student interactions with COMPLETE coaches to connect students to the completion grant and other resources. In year one, tnAchieves sent a pre-notice to eligible students that a completion grant fund had been established, which initiated substantial interest. tnAchieves used email, text messages, and small group meetings at the outset of the semester to build awareness of the program. **Figure 3** (to the right) illustrates an example of this communication.

In the first year, tnAchieves awarded all completion grant funds to needy students within the first 10 weeks of the semester. To receive funds, students completed the [tnAchieves completion grant application](#), which notified coaches and initiated a connection. Coaches use the amount requested, the amount allowable based on the category, allowable funds remaining for the student, and in case of supplies, fees, and housing, the bill, to determine the grant amount. Once all funds were expended, the application closed but discussion between coaches and students persisted to find other resources to alleviate student need (e.g., loaned laptops, etc.).

While the Ayers Foundation and tnAchieves have varied models for coaching, both partnering organizations serve students with financial need. THEC/TSAC, informed by the legislation, established parameters for the disbursement of funds to students who completed an application for and were awarded a completion grant. Because the completion grant pilot is embedded within the coaching initiative, both partnering organizations work closely with students and strategically engage students eligible for grants. To minimize the risk that a student applies for a completion grant and is denied because they are ineligible, funds were depleted, etc., tnAchieves closed their completion grant application, which has implications for measuring student need or demand. Section II of this report details more information about the grants disbursed and the students receiving them.

**Figure 3:** Sample Communication to Eligible Students, tnAchieves



Section 2:

Completion Grant

Recipients



# Tennessee Promise Applicants

The Tennessee Promise application involves several steps. **Table 2** presents the proportion of applicants completing each step in the application process by cohort.

The application cycles for cohorts 6 and 7 span the onset and impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Cohort 6 applied to Tennessee Promise prior to the onset of the pandemic, but experienced disruptions in their senior year of high school. Cohort 7 represents the Class of 2021, which experienced disruptions in both their junior and senior year of high school.

Nearly a quarter, 24.9%, of Tennessee Promise applicants from the Class of 2021 were eligible for Tennessee Promise, and the smallest share since the inception of the program (21.7%) were enrolled in a Tennessee public institution. These patterns are consistent with trends found in THEC's [College Going and the Class of 2021](#) report released in May 2022. For more information about Tennessee Promise trends visit THEC's [Tennessee Promise Report](#).

**Table 2:** Tennessee Promise Application Process by Proportion, Cohorts 5 through 7

	Cohort 5	Cohort 6	Cohort 7
<b>Applied for Tennessee Promise</b>	64,243	64,063	61,657
<b>Filed the FAFSA</b>	88.4%	89.7%	86.0%
<b>Completed Community Service</b>	44.6%	-	44.6%
<b>Eligible for Tennessee Promise</b>	29.5%	30.4%	24.9%
<b>Enrolled at an Eligible Public Institution</b>	26.4%	26.4%	21.7%

Notes: Community service requirements were waived for Cohort 6 due to COVID-19 pandemic. For more information about temporary rule suspensions see page 8. Eligible for Tennessee Promise reflects students paid \$0 or more at all eligible institutions and students who are on the waitlist or have an eligible leave of absence, whereas Enrolled at an Eligible Public Institution reflects students paid \$0 or more and found in enrollment records at a public college. For Cohort 7 this reflects fall enrollment only – there will be modest increases with the inclusion of spring and summer enrollment (approx. 400 students or .6%). For reference: Cohort 5 = 2019-20, Cohort 6 = 2020-21, and Cohort 7 = 2021-22.

## Completion Grant Recipients

Not all Tennessee Promise students are eligible for the completion grant pilot. Tennessee Promise students must participate in college coaching and have financial need as determined by the partnering organization serving their high school county (see **Figure 4**).

**Figure 4:** Eligibility for Completion Grants



Over 1,300 grants were awarded in 2021-22 totaling over \$240,000 (see **Table 3**). The average grant was approximately \$182. **Table 4** shows the distinct number of recipients (711) in 2021-22. On average, recipients received \$343 in completion grant aid. This means, recipients received an average of nearly two (1.9) grants each. Data on completion grant recipients by institution are available in **Appendix C**.

**Table 3:** Completion Grants by Term, 2021-22

Term	Grants	Total Amount Awarded	Average Grant Amount
Fall 2021	1,267	\$ 235,761.73	\$ 186.08
Spring 2022	73	\$ 8,024.00	\$ 109.92
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,340</b>	<b>\$ 243,785.73</b>	<b>\$ 181.93</b>

**Table 4:** Completion Grant Recipients, 2021-22

Academic Year	Recipients	Total Amount Awarded	Average Recipient Grant
<b>2021-22</b>	<b>711</b>	<b>\$ 243,785.73</b>	<b>\$342.88</b>

Note: The 2021-22 academic year reflects fall 2021 and spring 2022. 703 students received grants in fall 2021 and 20 students received grants in spring 2022. There is duplication across terms.

The completion grants pilot identifies five categories for need, including Food, Housing, Transportation, Books and Supplies, and Class-Specific Fees. More information about these categories can be found on page 12. For this year’s report, Books/Supplies and Class-Specific Fees are combined. This combined category represents Books, Supplies, Computers, and Fees specific to programs.

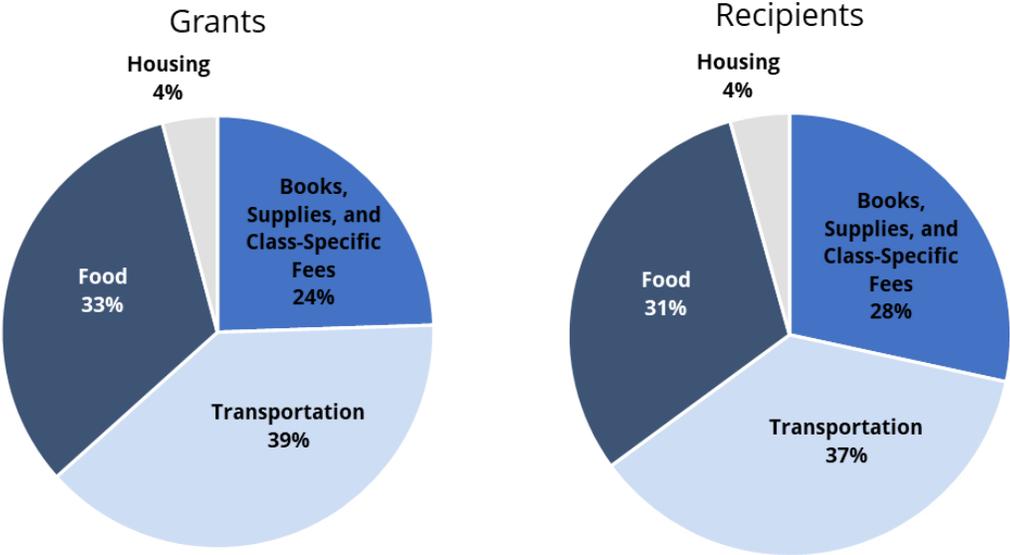
Of the 1,340 grants awarded in 2021-22, the majority were in the Transportation category, which includes funds for gas or ride-share assistance to get students to and from school. Food was the second highest category awarded in terms of grants and provides students with grocery gift cards to purchase food. Importantly, limits were set on total transportation or grocery awards, which may impact the frequency of these awards. A total of 328 Books, Supplies, and Class-Specific Fee grants were awarded, which totaled over \$116,000. This category reflected the largest expenditures in the first year of the pilot. **Table 5** shows the count of grants awarded and count of unique students in each category. Data show that some students received more than one grant in the same category, and some students received multiple grants across different categories.

**Table 5:** Completion Grants by Category, 2021-22

Category	Grants	Recipients	Total Awarded	Average Grant
Transportation	521	405	\$52,576.78	\$100.92
Food	436	341	\$45,575.00	\$104.53
Books, Supplies, and Class-Specific Fees	328	315	\$116,859.74	\$356.28
Housing	55	48	\$28,774.21	\$523.17
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,340</b>	<b>1,109</b>	<b>\$243,785.73</b>	<b>\$181.93</b>

**Figure 5** illustrates the distribution of grants and recipients across the four categories. The relative share of each category is similar across the total grants awarded and by recipient. On average, students receiving grants in either the Food or Transportation categories received 1.3 grants each. Given the four reported funding categories, students seeking multiple grants in Food and Transportation could be indicative of recurring need or a reflection that most funds were depleted before the end of the first semester, limiting recurring needs for class materials, or both.

**Figure 5:** Completion Grants and Recipients by Category, 2021-22



**Figure 6** depicts the share of overall funding by category illustrating that Books, Supplies, and Class-Specific Fees make up 48% of completion grant funds expended but only 24% of grants allocated, as evidenced by the average grant approximating \$356.

**Figure 6:** Completion Grant Dollars Awarded by Category, 2021-22



Completion grants are available to a subset of Tennessee Promise students who participate in college coaching and meet financial requirements. Approximately 3,000 students participated in college coaching with tnAchieves and the Ayers Foundation in 2021-22. The conditions to be considered a coaching student vary by partnering organization. The Ayers Foundation recognizes all high school graduates who enroll at

Jackson State or Columbia State community college or are identified as at-risk and on Tennessee Promise as coaching students.<sup>14</sup> tnAchieves recognizes a student as a coaching student if they are low-income, enrolled full-time at a community college, and have a minimum of two connections with their coach.<sup>15</sup> Students matriculating to an eligible Tennessee Promise institution (e.g., four-year college or TCAT) and who apply for the grant are added to tnAchieves' coaching roster. More information about these distinctions can be found starting on page 13.

**Table 6** shows 2021-22 completion grant recipients, 2021-22 coaching participants, and Tennessee Promise students in cohorts 5, 6, and 7.<sup>16</sup> When comparing grant recipients to coaching students, recipients are reflective of coaching students across gender, and Black and Hispanic students make up a greater share of completion grant recipients than coaching students. When compared to Tennessee Promise cohorts overall, women, Black, and Hispanic students are disproportionately represented in the college coaching program.

**Table 6:** Grant Recipients, Coaching Participants, and Promise Eligible Cohorts, 2021-22

<b>Recipient Characteristics</b>	<b>Grant Recipient</b>	<b>Coaching Participant</b>	<b>Promise Eligible (Cohort 5, 6, &amp; 7)</b>
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	32.5%	32.4%	46.8%
Female	67.5%	67.6%	53.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>711</b>	<b>2,997</b>	<b>47,808</b>
<b>Race</b>			
Asian/Pacific Islander	1.8%	2.2%	1.6%
Black	25.9%	18.3%	13.1%
Hispanic	12.4%	10.4%	6.8%
White	50.5%	61.4%	70.4%
Other*	3.5%	3.0%	2.4%
Unknown/No Response	5.9%	4.9%	5.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>711</b>	<b>2,997</b>	<b>47,809</b>
<b>First Generation</b>			
No	42.9%	49.5%	60.4%
Yes	5.1%	4.8%	36.7%
Unknown	52.0%	45.7%	2.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>711</b>	<b>2,998</b>	<b>47,809</b>

Notes: Grant Recipient represents the unduplicated count of students receiving funds from completion grants. Coaching Participants are identified by Partnering Organizations and represent students who participated in coaching. Promise eligible represents all cohort 5, 6, and 7 students who participated in Tennessee Promise. These groups are not mutually exclusive. \*Other is an option within FAST for student selection and is grouped with Alaskan Native in this table.

<sup>14</sup> The Ayers Foundation classifies a student as at-risk if they are first generation, low-income (receiving Pell grant), academically underprepared, experiencing transportation challenges, or at the high school counselor's recommendation.

<sup>15</sup> In the first year this was operationalized as a \$0 EFC. In year two, this is operationalized as Pell eligible.

<sup>16</sup> Due to timing and the depletion of completion grant funds there are some grant recipients (n= 205) who are not considered coaching participants. Importantly, these grant recipients were participating in coaching at the time of grant receipt but did not stay on to fulfill all requirements to be considered a coaching participant for the semester.

## Conclusion

The completion grants pilot awarded over \$240,000 to more than 700 students in its first year. The coaching and completion grant initiatives administered by the partnering organizations seek to address the barriers Tennessee Promise students face in their continued enrollment and completion. Completion grant data indicate that students have needs inside and outside of the classroom, including Transportation, Food, coursework costs (books, supplies, and class-specific fees), and Housing (ordered by grants awarded) that are barriers to their success. Future reports will include outcomes information for grant recipients, including persistence and college completion.

As of the time of this report, the completion grants pilot is in year two. Additional funds were made available allowing tnAchieves to expand the program to students receiving any Pell grant dollars, in alignment with the Ayers Foundation eligibility criteria. An update to this report capturing outcomes for year one recipients and year two participation will be available in January 2024.

# Appendices



## Appendix A: Glossary

**Locally Governed Institutions (LGI):** There are six public universities in Tennessee that have a local governing board. The six institutions are Austin Peay State University, East Tennessee State University, Middle Tennessee State University, Tennessee State University, Tennessee Technological University, and the University of Memphis.

**Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR):** The Tennessee Board of Regents is one of the two public systems of higher education in Tennessee. The Tennessee Board of Regents governs 13 community colleges and 24 Colleges of Applied Technology across the state.

**Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology (TCATs):** There are 24 TCATs across the state, which provide training for workers to obtain technical skills and professional training.

**Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship (TELS):** The Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship program is a collection of scholarship and grant programs funded by state education lottery proceeds. These programs are intended to provide financial awards to offset costs associated with pursuing postsecondary education (HOPE, GAMS, Aspire, Access, and Wilder-Naifeh Technical Skills Grant, among others).

**Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC):** The Tennessee Higher Education Commission was created in 1967 by the Tennessee General Assembly to coordinate and foster unity within higher education. The Commission coordinates two systems of public higher education (the University of Tennessee and the Tennessee Board of Regents) and the six locally governed institutions (Austin Peay State University, East Tennessee State University, Middle Tennessee State University, Tennessee State University, Tennessee Technological University, and the University of Memphis).

**Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities Association (TICUA):** [TICUA](#) is a membership organization for Tennessee's private colleges and universities to work together in areas of public policy, cost containment, and professional development. There are currently 34 member institutions.

**Tennessee Promise Endowment:** As stated in T.C.A. § 4-51-111(b)(3), an amount equal to \$100 million must remain in a reserve account. These funds can be drawn upon when lottery revenues are insufficient to fund Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarships (e.g., HOPE Scholarships). The transfers to the Promise Endowment account took place in 2014-15 (July through Oct 2014) in the following amounts: \$312,542,000 from the lottery reserve, and \$48,839,300 from TSAC's operating fund for a total initial transfer of \$361,381,300.

**Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation (TSAC):** The Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation (TSAC) was created in 1974 by the Tennessee General Assembly as a non-profit corporation with the merging of the Tennessee Educational Loan Corporation and the Tennessee Tuition Grant Program. TSAC administers over 20 different state student financial aid programs, including the HOPE scholarship, Tennessee Promise, Tennessee Reconnect, Tennessee Student Assistance Award, and the Dual Enrollment grant.

**The University of Tennessee (UT):** The University of Tennessee is one of the two public systems of higher education in Tennessee. The University of Tennessee's Board of Trustees governs 4 universities (Knoxville, Chattanooga, Martin, and Southern), the Health Science Center, the Space Institute, the Institute for Agriculture, and the Institute for Public Service.

## Appendix B: Sample Communication, Ayers Foundation



### Action Item: Tennessee Promise

Hello,

So far, you have fulfilled the following needs to remain TN Promise eligible.

- Completed a FAFSA prior to the March, 1st Deadline
- Submitted Community service for the upcoming semester/trimester
- Attended a mandatory meeting with your Ayers Counselor

Congratulations on meeting these milestones!

**If you are experiencing issues meeting any of the following needs:**

- Food
- Transportation
- Books and supplies
- Housing
- Class-Specific Fees

Follow this [LINK](#) to see if you are eligible to request help through a Completion Grant. A completion grant is intended to help students fulfill unmet needs while relieving stress enabling students to move forward in achieving their academic goals.

If you have questions about The Completion Grant, please contact your Ayers Counselor.

Sincerely,  
The Ayers Foundation

## Appendix C: Completion Grants by Institution

Institution	Grants	Total Awards	% of Grants Overall	% of Grants by Sector
<b>Community Colleges</b>				
Chattanooga State	57	\$9,276.14	4.3%	5.5%
Cleveland State	32	\$6,443.82	2.4%	3.1%
Columbia State	63	\$9,025.52	4.7%	6.1%
Dyersburg State	45	\$6,670.99	3.4%	4.4%
Jackson State	89	\$14,488.69	6.6%	8.6%
Motlow State	86	\$17,205.25	6.4%	8.3%
Nashville State	97	\$15,368.91	7.2%	9.4%
Northeast State	122	\$21,995.69	9.1%	11.8%
Pellissippi State	19	\$3,433.94	1.4%	1.8%
Roane State	57	\$9,752.51	4.3%	5.5%
Southwest Tennessee	162	\$29,972.88	12.1%	15.7%
Volunteer State	117	\$18,466.27	8.7%	11.4%
Walters State	84	\$15,724.52	6.3%	8.2%
<b>Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology</b>				
TCAT Chattanooga	*	*	*	*
TCAT Covington	*	*	*	*
TCAT Crump	38	\$5,301.50	2.8%	21.2%
TCAT Dickson	15	\$2,762.33	1.1%	8.4%
TCAT Elizabethton	17	\$2,520.51	1.3%	9.5%
TCAT Harriman	*	*	*	*
TCAT Hartsville	*	*	*	*
TCAT Hohenwald	13	\$1,526.00	1.0%	7.3%
TCAT Jacksboro	*	*	*	*
TCAT Jackson	*	*	*	*
TCAT Knoxville	*	*	*	*
TCAT Livingston	*	*	*	*
TCAT McMinnville	*	*	*	*
TCAT Memphis	*	*	*	*
TCAT Morristown	12	\$3,475.36	0.9%	6.7%
TCAT Murfreesboro	*	*	*	*
TCAT Nashville	*	*	*	*
TCAT Northwest	*	*	*	*
TCAT Oneida	*	*	*	*
TCAT Paris	*	*	*	*
TCAT Pulaski	*	*	*	*
TCAT Ripley	*	*	*	*
TCAT Shelbyville	*	*	*	*

Institution	Grants	Total Awards	% of Grants Overall	% of Grants by Sector
<b>Public Universities</b>				
Austin Peay State University	26	\$6,517.34	1.9%	74.3%
Tennessee State University	*	*	*	*
University of TN Southern	*	*	*	*
<b>Private Institutions</b>				
Baptist Health Sciences University	*	*	*	*
Bethel University	*	*	*	*
Carson-Newman University	*	*	*	*
Christian Brothers University	*	*	*	*
Cumberland University	32	\$9,183.36	2.4%	33.3%
Johnson University	*	*	*	*
King University	*	*	*	*
Lane College	*	*	*	*
LeMoyne-Owen College	*	*	*	*
Lincoln Memorial University	*	*	*	*
South College	29	\$5,897.33	2.2%	30.2%
Trevecca Nazarene University	*	*	*	*
Tusculum University	*	*	*	*
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,340</b>	<b>\$243,785.73</b>		